

EXHIBIT T


Declaration of Peter C. Salerno
In Support of Defendant Yassin Kadi's Motion
To Exclude the Testimony of Victor Comras

03 MDL 1570

July 31, 2023

The Osama bin Laden I Know

WITH A
NEW
AFTERWORD



"Peter L. Bergen has written what will long be the 'go-to' resource . . . a chronological record of what is known about bin Laden from his birth in 1957 to 2005, assembled by stringing together statements from bin Laden and those who taught him, met him, worked with him, or interviewed him over those forty-eight years."

—Richard A. Clarke, *The Washington Post*

PETER L. BERGEN

Author of the *New York Times*
Bestseller *Holy War, Inc.*

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THE AFGHAN WAR 31

[in the far north of Afghanistan]. We were in Mujahideen and that trip took forty days of the way. And [when the villagers] hear that an Arab, all the village's people come out of the house they remember that the Arabs speak Arabic. They came from the land of Mecca and

[in that language] and we found it very, very easy. As we pass the villages, the people would come out to ask us to give speech in the mosques. They were just crying, "Allahu Akbar!" [God is the greatest]. They would come, some of them from three miles away, some of them from three miles away, some of them from three miles away. The feeling was that I can't find it anywhere. I used to feel it in the air. I'm doing my duty, making my duty, and no pressure of life, sitting with people all were loving the Prophet, all loving the land. Very exciting in a positive way. For two months. I think these months give me a push, pushed me to act in a responsible way. I think in Afghanistan was not just to take a stand against the Soviets and be *shahid* [martyred] but a very small part of our duty. I recognized that these people needed to stay at home in Pakistan. In order to do that, you had to be able to stay inside Afghanistan, and you needed to build hospitals.

When I went to Sheikh Abdullah. He was a man who came from deep inside Afghanistan. He had to go to the Hajj [in Saudi Arabia] and it was useful and beneficial to bring me to stay in Mecca. And Sheikh Abdullah was in that period he was the star of jihad. For Abdullah Azzam, what statement is it to Saudi Arabia? Sheikh Abdullah finally have a young man with me who just re-

cently came from Mazar-i-Sharif, the furthest front inside Afghanistan, and he saw exactly what is happening inside Afghanistan. I call him to come to the stage to speak." I couldn't. Too shy.

And so we spent three or four days there, and we lived in the house of Osama in Mecca. The entire bin Ladin family were hosting people. And they had food and buses to take people. And Osama was very polite in his dealings and very generous.

Wael Julaidan, a Saudi from a Medina family involved in real estate, was a student in the United States as the war in Afghanistan heated up in the mid-eighties. Julaidan's account illustrates the effectiveness of Abdallah Azzam's recruiting tours."

I lived in Jeddah for three years from '81 to '83. Osama, we see him from time to time in our social activities, but then in '85 in Pakistan, that's when I went I start to create some relationship [with him]. We were all there to serve the Afghans. For such a power like the Soviet's Red Army to come and attack such a poor country like Afghanistan, everybody was unhappy. [Osama] was so much feeling responsibility toward the Afghan issue and he wanted to extend whatever help he can to the Afghans.

Sheikh Abdullah Azzam had given that issue a lot of effort, to show how this invasion could be dangerous to all the region. And he also came to the States in December '84 and he talked about Afghanistan. I listened to his lecture. He talked about how much people there are in need of everything and I felt the responsibility at least to go and visit there [to see] if I can be of any help. Finally, I decided to visit Afghanistan. That was in April '85. I was twenty-eight.

I was doing my Master's degree at that time, in range management—developing the range for animal grazing—at the University of Arizona in Tucson. I was really appreciating the American system, the respect for the individual and the freedom we had been given, the chance to talk about anything that we are interested in.

I came to Saudi Arabia, visited my family, and then I went to Pakistan. I found that the size of the problem—it's so big, so large, and that's why I agreed with Dr. Azzam, I would like to mainly concentrate on relief work. So from '85 to '94 I lived [in Pakistan].

Hutaifa Azzam, Abdullah Azzam's son.

You could say that bin Laden separated from my father in 1987. Bin Laden said that he wanted to make special camps for the Arabs only, where we can start our own jihad and we give the orders. We will gather all the Arabs in Afghanistan in one area in Jalalabad [in eastern Afghanistan]. My father was against that. He was shocked.

So in 1987 Osama decided to separate and create special camps and special forces for the Arabs. Osama decided to move all of his troops into Jalalabad. [The question was] how he could transfer his troops there? There is no way from Pakistan. That's impossible.

At that time he started opening the road with bulldozers from Jaji to Jalalabad; it goes directly through the mountains of Tora Bora. [It took him] maybe six to seven months to build this road. Only four-wheel drives could drive on it.

This seems to be the first time that bin Laden became familiar with the mountains of Tora Bora. The half-year he spent building the road through the Tora Bora mountains in 1987 would be knowledge that would serve him well almost a decade and a half later when he fled there after the fall of the Taliban in November 2001.

Wael Julaidan, who headed the Saudi Red Crescent Organization in Pakistan in the mid-1980s, was also a key player in the Services Office.²⁴

Abdullah Azzam was insisting that we were only here to help the Afghans. I'm saying the same thing—always trying to remind Osama that we are here to solve the Afghan issue. He felt that he can do more. One day in Peshawar we meet together and we try to solve this problem. Abdullah Azzam made it very clear: "You are there to serve the issue through the Afghans. There is no other agenda."

Jamal Ismail, the Palestinian journalist.

Osama was not having any involvement in the Services Office since late '87 or maybe early '88. In '88 his financial support for Services Office

stopped by mutual understanding between

Osama was willing to contribute and finance the Services Office, which means "fighting." Services Office was more of an NGO [nongovernmental organization] with a printing press in Peshawar. They were building mosques and dispensaries. Osama was providing financial support for fighting inside Afghanistan.

It was not an accident that bin Laden's split from the group around the time of his first meeting with Ayman al-Zawahiri in 1986. For bin Laden, the slightly older, cerebral Zawahiri had first joined the group in 1985 and had by 1986 recently served three years in prison for his jihadist activities. So, Zawahiri was more politically than bin Laden.²⁵ For Zawahiri, bin Laden presented an interesting opportunity: someone who was becoming a genuine war hero, whose deep pockets in 1987 Zawahiri was setting up his own organization. Within a couple of years was being supported by bin Laden. Zawahiri increasingly turned bin Laden against the Taliban and also aligned him with the hardline Islamist leader Hekmatyar, the bitter rival of the Afghan communist government. In short, the late 1980s marked the beginning of a relationship between bin Laden and Zawahiri that continued

Jamal Ismail.

²⁵ Ayman al-Zawahiri came to Peshawar for a function which was organized by a Kuwaiti organization. Osama was asked to deliver a sermon there. When he listened to bin Laden he introduced him as the first meeting.

Ayman al-Zawahiri, from his 2001 autobiography *My Ummah's Banner*.

Awards: Army Lapel Button/Parachute Badge/M16 Expert Badge/
Army Service Ribbon/Army Achievement Medal/Army Commem-
dation Medal.



After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the Afghan fac-
tions, which were fragmented by internal bickering and outright fight-
ing, made little headway in seizing Kabul. The most pronounced
conflict was between the longtime rival commanders Gulbuddin Hek-
matyar and Ahmad Shah Massoud.

While bin Laden had left Pakistan in November of 1989 and had
moved back to Saudi Arabia, by early 1991 he was back in Pakistan,
making efforts to mediate between the Afghan factions. However, as
Afghanistan slipped into civil war in early 1992, bin Laden washed his
hands of the place and decided to move to Sudan.

Wael Julaidan remembers that he and bin Laden tried to placate the
warring Afghan leaders during the early nineties.

Osama for one year and a half, from '89 to '91 was in Jeddah. Then he
decided to go to Medina because he's working with his family's project
and also he can be in the holy place where he can be nearby the mosque.
And at the time developing the whole city [of Medina] was taking place.

Bin Laden returned to Peshawar in early '91 and he stayed until early
'92 and I see him from time to time because I was there. We used to visit
the Afghan leaders to solve disputes, because at that time the disputes of
the Afghan leaders is getting more serious. From time to time we go to-
gether to talk to the different Afghan leaders, to calm them.

**Abdullah Anas had helped to run the Services Office with Abdullah
Azzam and bin Laden. He recalls that during this period bin Laden had
a poorly conceived plan to take Kabul.**

Osama, he had to create an organization and to keep everything under
his control, but as an organizer, I think he had many mistakes during this
period. In 1991 he had a project to enter Kabul [then under the control
of the Afghan communists] and he spent 100 million rupees (more than
1.5 million dollars) and after a few weeks, everything collapsed and the

people took his 100 million rupees. In a catastrophe, I consider him.

**Haji Deen Mohamed was a
leader of the mujahideen fighting
against the communists in Afg-
hanistan. He was one of the first
to attack Kabul.⁴¹**

I saw bin Laden in 1991. He was an important personality.
When I met bin Laden in Peshawar, he was planning to attack Kabul. We were
in Peshawar. I was the representative of Afghanistan. He was talking
about this because Khalis was talking about this. He had a two-hour
debate with bin Laden.

To be honest we didn't care much. The only thing he did was
he was rich. When Osama was in Peshawar, the mujahideen were supporting him.

**Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai was
a leader of the mujahideen fighting
to 1996.⁴²**

I have seen [bin Laden]. When he was in Peshawar. Today he is a very big man. He was giving
donations for us like thousands of dollars. He had a motivation that the Soviet Union
was leaving Afghanistan.

After the defeat of the Soviet Union, that were in Afghanistan: "We were
in fighting the Soviet Union. Please do not participate in any
war. And please go back to your homes. And please go back to your homes.
All of us to the Arabs. Because all of us to the Arabs. Because all of us to the Arabs.
Afghan hard-line Islamist] Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

**Hekmatyar, nominally the p-
resident of the government that replaced the
Soviet government in 1992, would shell Kabul
from his base in Peshawar.**

... I KNOW

... send them back to Saudi Arabia back to normal ... to study Shari'a (Islamic) law. That's why a ... "How come you have hundreds and hundreds ... then you just decide to send them back to the ... law. That means you haven't got a plan and can't ... leader."

... bin Laden was widely seen as a war hero. Yet ... veterans of foreign wars, could not settle back into ... life when he returned home. Essam Deraz, the ... who covered bin Laden during the Afghan jihad, ... Arabia in 1990 as he delivered what appears to ... American speech in public.⁴

... bin Laden] changed. He get permission to make a ... Saudi Arabia, after Afghan war finished. It was ... and the supporting of USA to [bring] a million ... Israel and this [made] the Palestinian ques- ... It was] in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, he told me, ... be with me for this speech. It is very impor- ... In this speech he attacked America very ... Arab people to cut off their relationship with ... We have to make a stand against America

... had not spoken to his old university buddy and ... den for four years, since they had had the bitter ... Laden's military operation in Jaji in eastern

... when he came back [to Saudi Arabia]. I was ... were very formal; we are polite, we just talk ... Sometimes we talk about horses. No poli- ... what's going on, what's happening?"

... busy. Many people coming, many people ... dy talking, "Osama is great." Everybody in ... 12/1/90.

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For me he was making a very big mistake, not only me; those who know him very closely: Wael [Julaidan], Abdullah Anas, all his friends from [the Saudi cities of] Jeddah, Medina. They left him between '86 and '88. They have been removed and the Egyptians took their place. He did not listen to anybody. He went with those Egyptians. I don't know what exactly they did, how they are able to manipulate him, how they are able to brain wash him.

When I really start to talk to him, he is not the Osama I knew. The difference: [before] we were sitting down analyzing things, talking nicely, quietly, and we came to a conclusion. But [now] he said, "No. It's like this. It's true. You are wrong."

The relationship, or lack thereof, between bin Laden and Saddam Hussein has long been a matter of debate. Yet it's clear from these accounts of what bin Laden was saying around the time of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 that al Qaeda's leader has long been an opponent of the Iraqi dictator.

Jamal al-Fadl is the Sudanese member of al Qaeda who testified for the prosecution in the New York trial of several men implicated in the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998.⁶

Saddam [Hussein] he don't believe most of Islam. He got something called Ba'ath [Arab socialist political party]. I remember even bin Laden himself in '88 he make lecture against Saddam. He say Saddam is a Ba'ath [ist] and Saddam one day he going to take all of Gulf area. I remember that in '88 he make lecture in Pakistan and everybody listen to that lecture.

Khaled Batarfi, bin Laden's old friend, recalls that bin Laden was predicting Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait months before it happened in August 1990.⁷

Last time I saw him was 1990, six months before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It was in Mecca in a friend's house where a group of intellectuals meet every Friday. And he came and talked about jihad in Afghanistan and told us then that he'd speak to us about Saddam. He said, "We should train our people, our young and increase our army and prepare

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him once in Khartoum and two additional times at that I was working on. The meeting in Khartoum was for the purpose of reporting to him about the day-to-day progress of the project. This meeting took place in his office for approximately 1½ to 2 hours. The two meetings took place when Osama bin Laden visited the

decision to leave my employment with Osama bin Laden. I had agreed on a salary with Osama bin Laden for his company, I learned that others working for his company had job titles and level of responsibility were greater than I was. During the course of my employment, I did not regularly worked 8 hours of overtime.

I that, if bin Laden agreed to pay equity I would resign. I resigned as the answer to my request through the Director General of the company. I never saw or talked with Osama bin Laden again. I realized that he needed me to come back for financial benefits. However, I did not return because I had, in our previous discussion, that if I resigned I would

worked on the project in Sudan I heard the following about bin Laden's reputation from other office employees. I had been in Afghanistan and that he had a large following in Afghanistan and Sudan. I heard that he was very powerful in Afghanistan and that his relationship with the Sudanese government was very good. During the approximately one year that I worked for bin Laden, I never heard that he was involved in any terrorism.

5. the relationship between Egypt and Sudan. I came to Sudan due to the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat during the summer of 1995 (an attack by Egyptian militants based in Sudan). At this time, I was told to come to Canada safely. I began looking for a way to enter Canada without a visa. I was told that Saudi Arabia does not require a visa to Canada and

I eventually bought a Saudi Arabian passport in Sudan for 2500 US dollars.

Abdullah Anas was bin Laden's friend in Peshawar during the mid-1980s.²²

I met Osama twice [in Sudan]. I think more than 95 percent of his time was for business. He failed completely. He was very angry about the Sudanese. I remember when we were in his car he told me "I am facing problems with the Sudanese people. They told me they never imagined in their life somebody can work eight hours. They come for work two-three hours, and then they go."

Jamal al Fadl.²³

We talked [with] bin Laden and we asked him if we have to make money because the business is very bad in Sudan. [Bin Laden] say our agenda is bigger than business. We not going to make business here, but we need to help the government, and the government help our group, and this is our purpose.

Wael Julaidan had known bin Laden in Jeddah since the early 1980s and had worked with him in Pakistan during the mid-1980s. He visited him in Sudan in 1993, the last time he would speak with bin Laden.²⁴

Until 1992, there was nothing serious [about], "al Qaeda" or a real front. It's more of an idea.

One day he disappeared, just disappeared [from Pakistan]. That was in '92, maybe mid-'92. Then later we have heard he's in Sudan.

I met Osama in '93 in Sudan because at that time there was land given to the Muslim World League [with which I am associated] to establish their own office in Khartoum. So I went there for an official visit for three days. I visited Osama and I talked to him. I said "Do you believe that your family are happy? As long as you are cut [of Saudi Arabia], everybody is unhappy."

Most of the family members went to him in Khartoum and tried to convince him the same—come back. I talked to some of his family. I said

"Why is Osama not back?" They said we are all trying, even we have asked our uncle who is a very old man, Abdullah (Mohamed bin Laden's brother), he went there. We thought if the oldest of the family would go there, he would surely come back. But Osama did not pay any respect to [his uncle].

Really, the big question here is: What happened? Is he the same Osama?

Essam al Ridi is the Egyptian pilot who met bin Laden in Pakistan in the mid-1980s. A decade before the 9/11 attacks, while bin Laden was based in Sudan, he reached out to al Ridi to ask him to purchase a jet in the United States, the first time that bin Laden had interested himself in American aviation. Ridi testified about that purchase in a New York terrorism trial in 2001. Excerpts of his testimony follow:²⁵

[In 1992] there was quite a few communications between me and Wadih El Hage (bin Laden's Lebanese-American personal secretary) about the interests of Osama acquiring an airplane [to be] used in Khartoum. The price range within 350,000 U.S. [dollars] and a [flying] range of about a little bit over two thousand miles. Once I located an airplane with that price and that range, I've called Wadih and specifically told him, it's 350,000 and I'll be offered 9 percent from the dealer, the owner of the airplane. This is a customary commission when you buy or sell an aircraft in the U.S.

This part did not really go through. They came later with a different price. They wanted something within the 250,000 [dollars] or less, and my response was, you'll never get a used jet aircraft for that price that will do the range that you want.

They [had] some goods of their own they want to ship from Peshawar [Pakistan] to Khartoum—[U.S.] Stinger missiles (a highly effective anti-aircraft missile).

With the reduction in the price and the range I had limited options, one of which was a military aircraft under the designation of T389 which is the equivalent of a civilian aircraft called Saber-40. The airplane was in storage, what we call "boneyard" in Tucson, Arizona. So we pulled the aircraft out of the storage and we had to go through certain checks mechanically to make it acceptable by the FAA [Federal Aviation Adminis-

tration]. [I spent] about a total of 230 thousand dollars, completely.

We took off from Dallas-Fort Worth to Khartoum, a distance of about 1500 miles. You cannot really fly that far. The first [flight] was Dallas-Fort Worth to the Mexican border. From there on to a place 67 latitude, then to Iceland, to Rome, Cairo, Khartoum. It was at the most, but actually we had some technical problems with the weather in [Canada]. It was minus 65. There was a crack in the window.

I just parked the airplane [at Khartoum] the same day, at night, we were offered dinner at a guest house. We had dinner and chatted with Osama bin Laden. We collectively agreed to look at the airplane the next morning to look at the airplane. I went to the airport, got it ready, cleaned it from the previous flight. Then I was told to go to the office. I met with the accountant, and to meet with Osama bin Laden to discuss an offer for me to work with [him].

The offer was earlier discussed over the phone. He will delay those things until I come there. The offer was to work with him to fly that plane to set up an operation of crop dusting because of the business.

Before we start discussing the offer I had a conversation with Osama on a personal level relating to the deal, and relating to my stand that led me to refuse the offer. Regardless what you think I want you to know the fact that you are a rich man trying to be a terrorist. I did not think that you have any military background or military experience. Thus, I think that what the guys is flat killing, not jihad. Now, people have gained experience, and now it's a different world. Well, thank you very much." He was very polite and later he said, "This is not jihad. This is not a terrorist certified company in Khartoum."

[Bin Laden offered me 1,200 dollars a month]

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42. Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai, interview by James Meek, Kabul, Afghanistan, August 2005.
43. U.S. State Department Background Note on Afghanistan, August 2005.

CHAPTER 5

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